AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #217

BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: "Lake Laogai"

Written by:

Tim Hedrick

October 12, 2006

ACT ONE

INT. KIDS' HOUSE - DAY

Sokka and Toph sit in the front room. Sokka draws something on a piece of parchment, but we can't see what it is. Katara and Aang enter, upbeat and holding some posters and leaflets.

KATARA
We found a printer to make our posters!

She holds up a poster with a picture of Appa on it -- kind of the Avatar version of a "lost dog" flier.

SOKKA
Hey, I thought designing the lost Appa poster was my job -- I've been working all day on my Appa.

He holds up the picture he's been working on, which looks like a giant blob with an arrow on it.

AANG
Sokka, the arrow is on Appa's head.

SOKKA
(gesturing at his picture)
This is his head.

Katara takes the picture from him and studies it.

KATARA
Why are feet coming out of it?

SOKKA
Those are his horns.

She studies the picture, then turns it upside down. Sokka snatches the picture back.

SOKKA
I haven't seen him in awhile, okay?

TOPH
It looks just like him to me.

SOKKA
(oblivious)
Thank you, I worked really--
(realizing)
Why do you feel the need to do that?

Toph shrugs.

KATARA
Let's just stick with the professional version.

AANG
Come on! Let's get busy!

The kids head out.

EXT. SKY OVER BA SING SE - DAY

Aang glides over the city with Momo, dropping leaflets with pictures of Appa. The leaflets flutter behind them, making a colorful twirling trail like falling autumn leaves. While Aang and Momo buzz around, we swoop down to...

INT. UNCLE'S TEA SHOP - DAY

The place is packed with satisfied customers. A wealthy merchant, QUON, comes up to Uncle, holding a cup of tea.

QUON
So you're the genius behind this incredible brew. The whole city is buzzing about you. I hope Pao pays you well.

UNCLE
Good tea is its own reward.

QUON
But it doesn't have to be the only reward. How would you like to have your own tea shop?

Uncle is overwhelmed and overjoyed.

UNCLE
My own tea shop?! This is a dream come true!

Pao, the shop owner, comes hustling over.

PAO
(to Quon)
What's going on here? Are you trying to poach my tea maker?

QUON
Sorry, Pao, but that's business for you, am I right?

PAO
(to Uncle)
Mushi, if you stay I'll... make you assistant manager. Wait, senior assistant manager!

QUON
(to Uncle)
I'll provide you with a new apartment in the Upper Ring. The tea shop is yours to do whatever you want, complete creative freedom.

UNCLE
I even get to name the shop?

QUON
Of course!

Uncle turns to Pao.

PAO
Um... senior executive assistant manager?

Uncle turns to Quon and shakes his hand, accepting the deal. Zuko wanders over to see what's going on. Uncle grabs him.

UNCLE
Did you hear, nephew? This man wants to give us our own tea shop in the Upper Ring of the city!

Zuko looks at Quon, who smiles broadly.

QUON
That's right, young man, your life is about to change for the better!

ZUKO
I'll try to contain my joy.

He wanders outside as Uncle and Quon talk excitedly.

EXT. TEA SHOP - CONTINUOUS

As Zuko stands outside the shop thinking, he sees something flutter down from the sky and grabs it. It's one of Aang's fliers. Zuko's eyes grow wide and he looks up to see where the flier came from, but his view is blocked by the surrounding buildings. He grabs hold of a ledge and begins clambering up the side of a building.

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Zuko scans the skyline, searching for Aang -- but he can see only a few fluttering leaflets. He looks again at the flier, clutching it like a precious treasure map, knowing that the Avatar may be within his reach again. He tucks the flier in his pocket and climbs back down to the street.

INT. KIDS' HOUSE - LATER

The kids sit around the house and Aang comes in with Momo.

AANG
I just finished dropping all the leaflets! Has anyone come in with news about Appa?

KATARA
It's only been a day -- just be patient.

Aang sits down with the others for a moment. There's a KNOCK at the door, and Aang hops up excitedly.

AANG
Wow, you're right! Patience really pays off!

He runs to the door and opens it. They see the ORIGINAL JOO DEE smiling at them and holding one of Aang's fliers.

AANG
Joo Dee?

JOO DEE
Hello Aang and Katara and Sokka and Toph.

SOKKA
What happened to you? Did the Dai Li throw you in jail?

She looks at them, incredulously.

JOO DEE
What? Jail? Of course not. The Dai Li are the protectors of our cultural heritage.

TOPH
But you disappeared at the Earth King's party.

JOO DEE
Oh, I simply took a short vacation to Lake Laogai, out in the country. It was quite relaxing.

KATARA
But then they replaced you with some other woman who also said her name was Joo Dee.

Joo Dee gets a blank, confused expression on her face.

JOO DEE
I'm Joo Dee.

The kids share an exhausted look. Not this again.

AANG
Why are you here?

JOO DEE
Dropping fliers and putting up posters isn't permitted within the city -- not without proper clearance.

SOKKA
We can't wait around to get permission for everything.

JOO DEE
(big smile)
You are absolutely forbidden by the rules of the city to continue putting up posters.

She bows. Aang looks at her with growing anger.

AANG
(defiant)
We don't care about the rules, and we're not asking permission. We're finding Appa on our own, and you should just stay out of our way.

He slams the door in Joo Dee's face. The kids look at each other, a little surprised at Aang's boldness.

SOKKA
That might come back to bite us in the blubber.

AANG
I don't care. From now on we do whatever it takes to find Appa.

TOPH
Yeah! Let's break some rules!

She picks up a nearby vase and smashes it to illustrate her point. They all head out, pumped to keep searching.

EXT. KID'S HOUSE - SAME

As the kids hustle down the street, we see a couple of DAI LI AGENTS watching them from a nearby corner. They follow the kids.

INT. DAI LI HEADQUARTERS IN THE UPPER RING - DAY

LONG FENG sits behind a giant oak desk in his office. Joo Dee sits across from him, visibly nervous.

LONG FENG
I'm very disappointed in your work with the Avatar and his friends, Joo Dee. I hoped that you would be able to control this situation.

JOO DEE
(flustered)
I'm so sorry, but they don't trust me any more.
(starting to break down)
I don't think I can keep working like this.

She's losing it completely. Long Feng gives her a long look and speaks very slowly, as if reading from a script.

LONG FENG
Joo Dee, the Earth King has invited you to Lake Laogai.

Joo Dee's eyes DILATE and she suddenly becomes preternaturally calm.

JOO DEE
I am honored to accept his invitation.

Long Feng smiles and nods.

LONG FENG
Good. Now go await further orders.

Joo Dee slowly stands and leaves the room. The two DAI LI AGENTS who were following the kids come in.

LONG FENG
If the Avatar keeps searching for his bison, it could upset the delicate balance we've worked so hard to achieve in the city. It could even cost us control of the Earth King.

AGENT ONE
Should we take care of him?

LONG FENG
No, it's much too dangerous for us to confront him directly. Let's see if we can still handle this... quietly.

INT. ZUKO AND UNCLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Uncle happily packs his things in the Lower Ring apartment, getting ready for his move. Zuko enters.

UNCLE
So I was thinking about names for my new tea shop. How about: "The Jasmine Dragon?" It's dramatic, poetic... has a nice ring to it.

Zuko pulls out the flier with the picture of Appa.

ZUKO
The Avatar is here in Ba Sing Se, and he's lost his bison.

Uncle takes the flier and examines it. He looks at Zuko.

UNCLE
We have a chance for a new life here. If you start stirring up trouble, we could lose all the good things that are happening for us.

ZUKO
Good things that are happening for <u>you</u>. Have you ever thought that I want more from my life than a nice apartment and a job serving tea?

UNCLE
There's nothing wrong with a life of peace and prosperity. I suggest you think about what it is that you want from your life... and why.

ZUKO
I want my destiny.

UNCLE
What that means is up to you.

Zuko storms out, leaving Uncle to finish his packing. A moment later, his face brighten with a "eureka" look!

UNCLE
The Tea Weevil!
(shaking head)
No, that's stupid.

EXT. LOWER RING OF BA SING SE - DAY

The kids stand next to the wall in the Lower Ring, each holding a stack of posters.

SOKKA
We'll split up to cover more area. Toph, I guess you should just come with me.

TOPH
Why, because you think I can't put up posters on my own?

She takes a poster and slaps it on the wall with the image of Appa facing the wall so it can't be seen. Everyone stands silently for a moment, unsure what to say.

TOPH
It's upside-down, isn't it?
(silent, awkward beat)
I'll go with Sokka.

They split up, each person carrying a stack of posters.

EXT. LOWER RING OF BA SING SE - LATER

Katara walks past a section of wall that's totally covered with posters. She looks around to see if anyone's watching, then rips another poster down and replaces it with an Appa poster. She hears a voice behind her...

JET (O.S.)
Katara?

Katara turns and sees Jet behind her, holding a poster.

JET
I think I can help you.

Katara instantly reacts with fury and mistrust, pulling out her waterskin and bending at him. Jet dodges the attack.

JET
Katara, I've changed!

KATARA
Tell it to some other girl, Jet!

She attacks so ferociously, Jet is forced to draw his hookswords to parry some of the blows -- he does not fight back, he only defends. She keeps bending at him, driving him down an alley. Jet finds himself up against a wall.

JET
I don't want to fight you. I'm here to help.

He drops his swords with a CLANG, and holds up his hands in surrender. Katara hesitates for an instant, then Waterbends at him again, freezing him against the wall. The rest of the kids come running down the alley, alarmed by the noise.

SOKKA
Katara, what is it?

They all stop short, shocked to find the frozen Jet.

KATARA
Jet's back.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

The kids argue while Jet remains stuck to the wall.

KATARA
We can't trust anything Jet says!

SOKKA
But we don't even know why he's here.

KATARA
I don't care why he's here, whatever the reason is, it can't be good!

JET
I'm here to help you find Appa!

Katara is silenced -- everyone is. There is a beat. Could it be true?

AANG
Katara, we have to give him a chance.

Katara still looks wary.

JET
I swear I've changed. I was a troubled person, and I let my anger get out of control. But I don't even have the gang now, I've put all that behind me.

KATARA
You're lying!

Toph walks up to the wall and puts her hand on it for a moment, right next to Jet, concentrating.

TOPH
He's not lying.

SOKKA
How can you tell?

TOPH
I can feel his breathing and heartbeat.
(MORE)

TOPH (cont'd)
When people lie, there's a physical reaction. He's telling the truth.

AANG
Katara, we don't have any leads. If Jet says he can take us to Appa, we have to check it out.

KATARA
All right.
(to Jet)
But we're not letting you out of our sight.

INT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

Jet leads the kids into a seemingly empty warehouse.

JET
This is the place I heard about.

They fan out, looking around.

AANG
There's nothing here.

Katara grabs Jet.

KATARA
If this is a trap--

JET
I told you, I work nearby! Two guys were talking about some giant furry creature they had. I figured it must be Appa.

TOPH (O.S.)
He was here!

The kids run over to a corner where Toph stands, holding a tuft of Appa fur. Aang grabs it and looks at it.

AANG
We missed him.

JANITOR (O.S.)
They took that big thing yesterday.

The kids look over and see a JANITOR walking into the warehouse with a push broom.

JANITOR
Shipped him out to some island. 'Bout time. I been cleaning up fur and various, uh, leavings all day.

The kids rush over to him.

AANG
What island? Where's Appa?

He wipes away some sweat from his brow.

JANITOR
Foreman said some rich royal-type on Whaletail Island bought him up. Guess for a zoo or such, though could be the meat'd be good.

AANG
We've gotta get to Whaletail Island!
(realizing)
Where's Whaletail Island?

Sokka looks discouraged.

SOKKA
Far, very far.

Sokka pulls out some maps to show Aang.

INSERT SHOT: THE MAP

Sokka points to the island, on the other side of the world from Ba Sing Se.

SOKKA
Here it is. It's near the South Pole, almost all the way back home.

BACK TO SCENE

KATARA
Aang, it'll take us weeks just to get to the tip of the Earth Kingdom. And then we'll need to find a boat to get to the island.

AANG
I don't care. We have a chance to find Appa. We have to try.

JANITOR
Must be nice to visit an island. I haven't had a vacation for years.

KATARA
(to the janitor, pointed)
Don't you have some more hair to clean up?

JANITOR
(hurt)
Shuffle on, I get 'ya. No more need for Old Sweepy.

He glumly slumps off. Katara turns back to the group.

KATARA
You're right, Aang. Right now our first concern has to be finding Appa. We can come back when we have him.

SOKKA
All right. Let's get moving.

JET
I'll come with you.

KATARA
We don't need your help.

JET
Why won't you trust me?

KATARA
(sarcastic)
Gee, I wonder.

TOPH
Was this guy your boyfriend or something?

KATARA
What? No!

Toph concentrates for a beat.

TOPH
I can tell you're lying.

EXT. LOWER RING OF BA SING SE - LATER

The kids hustle through the streets of Ba Sing Se with Jet.

SOKKA
We can take the train out to the wall, but then we'll have to walk.

Aang's mood is up, he has a new spring in his step.

AANG
Don't worry, on the way back we'll be flying.

Toph smiles happily.

TOPH
We're finally leaving Ba Sing Se -- worst city ever.

From behind them they hear someone call out-

SMELLERBEE (O.S.)
Jet!

They turn and see Smellerbee and Longshot running toward them. Katara turns to Jet, who looks totally confused.

KATARA
I thought you said you didn't have your gang anymore.

JET
I don't...

Smellerbee runs up and hugs Jet.

SMELLERBEE
We were so worried! How did you get away from the Dai Li?

KATARA
(accusing)
The Dai Li?

Jet seems rattled, like he's being reminded of a bad memory.

JET
I don't know what she's talking about!

SMELLERBEE
He got arrested by the Dai Li a couple of weeks ago. We saw them drag him away.

She looks to Longshot for backup. He nods.

JET
Why would I be arrested? I've been living peacefully in the city!

Toph looks confused.

TOPH
This doesn't make any sense -- they're both telling the truth.

KATARA
That's impossible.

SOKKA
No it's not. Toph can't tell who's lying because they both think they're telling the truth. Jet's been brainwashed!

Everyone turns to Jet, suspiciously. What's he going to do?

JET
That's crazy! It can't be...
(paranoid)
Stay away from me!

The kids close in on him, then grab him and neutralize him.

EXT. BA SING SE STREET - NIGHT

One of the Dai Li agents we saw with Long Feng earlier walks down the street. Zuko, with a blue bandana over his face, runs into the Dai Li agent, knocks him down, and sprints off.

ZUKO
Out of my way, skinny!

The agent hops up and pursues Zuko, who ducks down an alley.

INT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The agent jogs down the alley, seeing Zuko standing silently at the end, the bandana still covering his face.

He Earthbends at Zuko with his rock-gloves. The blows strike Zuko in the chest, and he wobbles. Then, his head falls off.

AGENT ONE
Huh?
(then)
(GASPS)

He suddenly feels cold steel against his neck. He cranes around to see the real Zuko with his broadswoards at the agent's throat.

ZUKO
If you don't want to end up like him, you'll do what I say.

He drags the Dai Li agent into the shadows.

INT. SMELLERBEE AND LONGSHOT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The kids sit with Jet in the small apartment where Smellerbee and Longshot have been living. Jet is tied securely to a chair.

KATARA
The Dai Li must have sent Jet to mislead us, and that janitor was part of their plot, too.

AANG
I bet they have Appa here in the city! Maybe he's the same place they took Jet!
(to Jet)
Where did they take you?!

Jet is growing more disturbed as his brain scrambles to process what's going on.

JET
Nowhere! I don't know what you're talking about!

AANG
We need to find a way to jog his real memories.

SOKKA
Maybe Katara could kiss him. That should bring back something.

KATARA
Maybe you should kiss him, Sokka.

SOKKA
Hey, just an idea.

AANG
(pouting)
A bad one.

They all think for a moment.

SOKKA
Oh, wait, I got it!

He looks around, then pulls a straw out of the lone mattress in the room. He takes it to Jet and puts it in his mouth. Jet awkwardly chews on it.

JET
I don't think it's working.

TOPH
Try to think of something from your past that triggers your emotions.

SMELLERBEE
The Fire Nation! Remember what they did to your family?

KATARA
Close your eyes. Picture it.

Jet closes his eyes and furrows his brow, concentrating.

JET'S MIND'S EYE P.O.V.

We see flashes of fire, people running frightened from their homes, a much younger Jet crying, looking for his family.

BACK TO SCENE

Jet breaks out of his vision, sweating.

JET
No... it's too painful.

The kids stand for a moment, silent and stumped. Katara pulls out her water skin.

KATARA
Maybe this will help.

She bends the water into a sparkling, circulating band around Jet's head. Jet relaxes and closes his eyes.

JET'S MIND'S EYE P.O.V.

We see quick flashes of his arrest, his brainwashing by the Dai Li, a placid lake, then a quick plunge under the water (NOTE: the camera plunges, this is not actually the way to enter/leave the headquarters) which seems to lead into a dank prison full of Dai Li agents.

BACK TO SCENE

Jet opens his eyes wide. We see his pupils readjust as the Dai Li mind control starts to fade. Katara breathes deeply, opens her eyes, and bends the water back into the skin.

JET
They took me to a headquarters under the water. Like a lake.

SOKKA
(remembering Joo Dee)
Wait. Remember what Joo Dee said? She said she went on vacation to Lake Laogai.

JET
That's it! Lake Laogai.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. LAKE LAOGAI - DAY

The kids, along with Jet, Smellerbee, and Longshot, stand at the shores of Lake Laogai. It's a huge lake, and as far as we can tell it looks like a serene, natural area with no evidence of structures of any kind.

SOKKA
So where's this secret headquarters?

JET
Under the water I think.

TOPH
There's a tunnel right there near the shore.

She points to a spot near where they're standing. Then Toph bends a rock hatch up and out of the water, exposing an entryway. Opening the hatch, we see a steep stairway that leads beneath the lake. The kids enter.

INT. HIDDEN PRISON - LATER

The kids reach the bottom of the stairs and enter a level tunnel that leads to a series of rooms and cells: a vast underground re-education center. They slink through the tunnels, looking for any sign of Appa.

JET
It's all starting to come back to me...

They follow his lead. As they go, they pass a room where a group of Joo Dees are being trained.

INSIDE THE ROOM

A DAI LI TEACHER stands in front of the room of identical-looking, brainwashed JOO-DEES who mimic his words.

DAI LI TEACHER
I'm Joo Dee, welcome to Ba Sing Se.

JOO DEES
I'm Joo Dee, welcome to Ba Sing Se.

DAI LI TEACHER
We're so lucky to have our walls to create order.

JOO DEES
We're so lucky to have our walls to create order.

JET
I think there might be a cell big enough to hold Appa up ahead.

The kids shudder and silently move on.

INT. DOWN THE TUNNEL A PIECE - A LITTLE LATER

The kids head down the tunnel and come to a door.

JET
I think it's through here.

They open the door they hope will lead them to Appa. As they open it, we go inside-

INT. PRISON CELL - SAME

This is the massive cell that does indeed house Appa, who is chained up against the wall, dozing. The door opens, and Appa raises his head to look at his visitor. But it's not the kids who enter, it's the Blue Spirit.

APPA
(GROWLS)

ZUKO
Expecting someone else?

INT. DIFFERENT ROOM IN THE PRISON - CONTINUOUS

The door of this room opens and the kids enter finding themselves facing Long Feng and a group of DAI LI AGENTS.

SOKKA
Now that's something different.

LONG FENG
You have made yourselves enemies of the state.
(to his agents)
Take them into custody.

The Dai Li agents attack and we begin a massive underground battle. The Dai Li agents have awesome Earthbending powers, using glove-like rock coverings on their hands to climb the walls or take down an opponent from across the room. The kids (including Longshot and Smellerbee) manage to hold off the agents and eventually begin to gain ground.

As Long Feng sees that his men may not be victorious, he ducks down a side tunnel.

AANG
Long Feng is escaping!

Aang Airbends his way through the agents. As it looks like one of them might bring a massive rock-fist down on his head, Jet steps up and blocks the blow with his hookswords. Aang blasts the agent back, and he and Jet pursue Long Feng.

INT. ANOTHER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jet and Aang run into the room, looking for Long Feng. As they run through, they hear the doorway close behind them. They turn to see Long Feng Earthbending the door closed.

LONG FENG
All right, Avatar, you've caused me enough problems. This is your last chance -- if you want your bison back.

AANG
You do have Appa! Tell me where he is!

LONG FENG
Agree to exit the city now, and I'll waive all charges against you and allow you to leave with your lost pet.

JET
You're in no position to bargain.

He looms over Long Feng with his swords.

LONG FENG
Am I not?

Aang assumes a fighting stance beside Jet.

AANG
You're definitely not.

Long Feng looks Jet in the eye.

LONG FENG
Jet, the Earth King has invited you to Lake Laogai.

Jet's eyes DILATE again, and his brainwashed look returns.

JET
I am honored to accept his invitation.

He then turns and leaps at Aang, attacking him with his hook-swords. Aang barely dives away from the attack as Long Feng watches, smiling.

INT. APPA'S PRISON CELL - CONTINUOUS

Zuko looks at Appa.

ZUKO
You're mine now.

He hears someone entering the cell behind him and turns with swords drawn. It's Iroh.

ZUKO
Uncle?

UNCLE
So, the Blue Spirit. I wonder who could be behind that mask?

Zuko shakes his head at his stupidity in blowing his cover so easily. He takes off the mask.

ZUKO
What are you doing here?

UNCLE
I was just about to ask you the same thing. What do you plan to do now that you've found the Avatar's bison? Keep it locked in our new apartment? Should I go put on a pot of tea for him?

ZUKO
First I have to get it out of here.

UNCLE
(losing his patience)
And then what?! You never think these things through! This is exactly what happened when you captured the Avatar at the North Pole. You had him, and then had nowhere to go.

ZUKO
I would have figured something out.

UNCLE
No, if his friends hadn't found you, you would have frozen to death.

Zuko closes his eyes tight, trying to focus on what he has to do.

ZUKO
I know my own destiny, Uncle.

UNCLE
Is it your own destiny? Or is it a destiny someone else has tried to force on you?

ZUKO
Stop it, Uncle! I have to do this!

UNCLE
I'm begging you, Prince Zuko. It's time for you to look inward, and begin asking yourself the big questions. Who are you? And what do you want?

Zuko hangs his head, thinking for a moment. He is frustrated and confused.

ZUKO
(TORTURED SCREAM)

INT. ROOM WITH AANG AND JET - CONTINUOUS

Aang continues to battle Jet, trying to keep himself safe without hurting Jet in the process.

AANG
Jet! It's me! Aang! You don't have to do this!

LONG FENG
I'm afraid he no longer has a choice.

Jet ignores Aang and tries again to strike. Aang blasts him back with an Airstrike, and Jet uses his swords to hook a pipe on the ceiling, swinging up and over Aang, landing behind him and striking again. Aang ducks and rolls away.

AANG
Jet! I'm your friend! Look inside your heart!

Jet stops for a moment. He's fighting the brainwashing, looking dizzy and confused.

LONG FENG
Do your duty, Jet!

Jet raises his swords above his head like he's about to throw them at Aang.

AANG
He can't make you do this! You're a freedom fighter!

LONG FENG
Do it! Do it now!

Jet finally breaks out of his stasis and throws the swords, not at Aang, but at Long Feng. Long Feng uses Earthbending to block the swords, then sends a massive strike against Jet, slamming him into the wall under a wave of rock.

LONG FENG
Foolish boy. You've chosen your own demise.

Aang rushes over to Jet to move the rocks away. As he does, the rest of the kids enter. Long Feng quickly Earthbends an escape route and leaves. As the kids gather around, Jet's eyes UNDILATE and return to normal.

JET
I'm sorry, Aang.

AANG
Don't be.

Katara kneels over Jet, and tries to use water from her pouch to heal him. The water turns BLACK.

KATARA
(worried)
This isn't good...

Smellerbee turns to the rest of the group.

SMELLERBEE
You guys go and find Appa. We'll stay with Jet.

KATARA
We're not going to leave you--

Longshot suddenly pipes up.

LONGSHOT
There's no time -- just go! We'll take care of him. He's our leader.

Everyone looks at Longshot, surprised. Jet looks into Katara's eyes.

JET
Don't worry, Katara.

Jet flashes that charming smile -- one last time.

JET
I'll be fine.

Katara nods, and gets up. As the kids leave, Toph turns to Sokka.

TOPH
(sotto to Sokka)
He's lying.

INT. APPA'S PRISON CELL - CONTINUOUS

The chains that held Appa are cut. Aang stops for a moment to investigate.

AANG
Appa's gone! Long Feng beat us here.

SOKKA
If we keep moving maybe we can catch up with them!

They hear Dai Li troops approaching and they rush out into...

EXT. LAKE LAOGAI - DAY

The kids pop out of a tunnel on the opposite side of the lake from where they entered (this tunnel is not underwater). The kids run along the shore of the lake. They look back and see the Dai Li troops behind them, continuing their pursuit.

SOKKA
You think we can outrun them?

AANG
I don't think it's going to matter.

He points ahead of them where Long Feng is emerging from another tunnel with more Dai Li agents.

*

Suddenly, Momo starts going crazy and flies up above them.

MOMO
(EXCITED CHITTERING)

AANG
What is it, Momo?

He looks up where Momo is flying. Up in the sky: it's Appa! The mighty sky bison, once again free to roam the troposphere, swoops down to rescue his old comrades. Tears stream down Aang's face.

AANG
Appa!

Appa lands and sends a massive air strike at the pursuing Dai Li agents with his tail, knocking them back. Long Feng and his group keep running at the kids. Appa sees him and charges at him, bellowing.

APPA
(ANGRY BELLOWING)

Long Feng's troops stop in their tracks, unwilling to battle this monster. But Long Feng, blinded by his limitless rage and ambition, keeps coming. When he finally arrives in front of Appa, he looks behind him, finding himself alone.

LONG FENG
(to Appa)
I can handle you by myself.

He starts to Earthbend at Appa, but Appa bites him on the leg and tosses him in the lake. The kids quickly climb on Appa.

Appa leaps into the sky. Aang hugs his giant, shaggy neck as Momo happily flutters around his head.

SOKKA
Yeah! Appa.

AANG
I missed you, buddy.

EXT. LAKE LAOGAI - MOMENTS LATER

Elsewhere, we see the surface of the lake. There is nothing for a beat, then we can just barely make out two murky figures beneath the surface. The figures get closer, then break through -- we see it is Uncle and Zuko.

UNCLE/ZUKO
(GASPING FOR BREATH)

As they crawl up on land, Uncle looks at Zuko proudly.

UNCLE
You did the right thing, nephew.

Zuko SHIVERS, and then looks at the Blue Spirit mask he has clutched in his hand, not so sure if he has made the right choice. Uncle sees the mask.

UNCLE
Leave it behind.

Zuko places the mask on the surface of the water. CLOSE UP on the mask as it floats on the surface for a moment or two. Then water comes up through the eye holes and the mouth, and it SINKS beneath the surface. We stay on it as the mask drifts down and disappears into the murky depths...

END OF SHOW